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Egypt on the eve of the Muslim conquest

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Egypt's population in the early seventh century AD cannot be determined with any certainty, but it probably numbered less than the five million persons frequently attributed to the province at the height of the Roman Empire in the Early Principate. By the year 600, the population may have declined to three million; mortality resulting from plagues erupting during Justinian's reign in the sixth century cannot be accurately estimated.[1] Many Egyptians were designated "Chalcedonians" or "Monophysites," but this distinction did not represent a genuine cleavage of ethnic identity in Egyptian society.[2] An assumption that "Chalcedonian" referred exclusively to Greeks rather than to native Egyptians is erroneous. Greek remained an important spoken and written language in Egypt, although by the early seventh century Coptic was used increasingly in written records. Subliterary texts in Coptic dated back to the early third century.[3]

Many other aspects of Egypt's economy, social structure and spiritual outlook during Late Antiquity persisted into the early seventh century. But the privatization of public functions by owners of great estates intensified from the fourth century, a process that significantly altered institutional

[1] I wish to acknowledge the indispensable aid of a fellowship of the American Research Center in Egypt in 1979 and from valuable critical comments of Todd M. Hickey, and the help of Professor John F. Oates and the Papyrology Room, Perkins Library, Duke University. Fundamental is R. S. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, 1993). On population: Hans-Albert Rupprecht, *Kleine Einführung in die Papyruskunde* (Darmstadt, 1994), 158.

[2] Ewa Wipszycka argues against any nationalist thesis, in "Le nationalisme a-t-il existé dans l'Égypte byzantine?" *The Journal of Juristic Papyrology*, 22 (1992), 83–128, reprinted in Wipszycka, *Études sur le christianisme dans l'Égypte de l'antiquité tardive*, Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum, 52 (Rome, 1990), 9–61.

[3] L. S. MacCoull, *Coptic Perspectives on Late Antiquity* (Aldershot, 1993); E. M. Isḥaq, "Coptic Language, Spoken," in A. S. Atiya (ed.), *Coptic Encyclopedia*, II, (New York, 1991), 604–7; T. G. Wilfong, "Coptic," in E. M. Meyers (ed.), *Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology of the Near East*, II (Oxford, New York, 1997), 65–7.

structures during the remaining periods of Byzantine administration.[4] Members of the social elite could still acquire some familiarity with the repertory of Greek authors of antiquity, as testified by the writings of the poet Dioskoros of Aphrodito in the sixth century or the historian Theophylact Simocatta in the early seventh.[5] Theatrical performances in Alexandria during the early seventh century continued to entertain audiences that included high officials.[6]

The general population was probably quite young, its numbers restricted by plague epidemics and widespread infant mortality. Agriculture continued as the foundation of the economy.

The Patriarch of Alexandria, Egypt's largest city,[7] controlled extensive properties and functioned as a prominent communal leader as well as head of the Church. The ecclesiastic institution itself changed over the period from the fourth to the seventh centuries. The Patriarchate, monasteries and religious foundations continued to mature, developing their institutional sophistication and acquiring more landed wealth through bequests and gifts. By the year 600, the ecclesiastic establishment was more elaborate than it had been in the fourth century. Forbidden to alienate its properties, the Church rarely lost its landed holdings. Many papyrological, hagiographic or historical narrative sources refer to the accumulation of vast wealth by ecclesiastical institutions in Egypt. The Patriarchate of Alexandria was the prime beneficiary, but several monasteries amassed large estates as well.[8] Many civilian and military officials envied this growth in ecclesiastic wealth, and disputed its propriety.[9]

Among religious minorities, the Jewish community was prominent. However, Jews do not appear to have figured significantly in either the Persian or Islamic conquests. If they had, Byzantine apologists would probably have attempted to attribute the loss of Egypt to them. In contrast

[4] J. Gascou, "Les grands domaines, la cité et l'état en Égypte byzantine," *Travaux et Mémoires*, 9 (1985), 1–90; J. G. Keenan, "Papyrology and Byzantine Historiography," *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists*, 30 (1993), 137–44; cf. I. F. Fikhman, "De nouveau sur la colonat du Bas-Empire," *Miscellanea papyrologica in occasione del bicentenario dell'edizione della Charta Borgiana, Papyrologica Florentina*, 19 (Florence, 1990), 159–179.

[5] L. MacCoull, *Dioscorus of Aphrodito: His Work and His World* (Berkeley, 1988); Julian Krüger, *Oxyrhynchos in der Kaiserzeit: Studien zur Topographie und Literaturrezeption* (Frankfurt, Bern, New York, 1990), 144–52.

[6] *Miracles of St. Artemios*, ed. trans. V. S. Crisafulli and John Nesbitt (Leiden, 1997), 108–115.

[7] C. Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity. Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore, 1997), 46–7.

[8] Jean Gascou and Leslie MacCoull, "Le cadastre d'Aphroditô," *Travaux et Mémoires*, 10 (1987), 102–58; Gascou, *Un codex fiscal Hermopolite (P. Sorb. II 69)*, American Studies in Papyrology, 32 (Atlanta, 1994), 57; Wipszycka, *Études sur le christianisme*.

[9] See the bibliographic additions of P. M. Fraser to A. J. Butler, *Arab Conquest of Egypt* (Oxford, 1978), xlvi–xlviii.

with assignations of blame in Palestine-Syria, there were no allegations of Jewish complicity or incidents of anti-Jewish hostility mentioned as causes for the failure of Byzantine forces to bar the Muslims from Egypt.

Although the intellectual horizons of its rural population may have been narrow, Egypt had maintained extensive ties with the external world long before the seventh century.[10] Egypt possessed renowned pilgrimage sites. Its Mediterranean ports of Alexandria and Pelusium were flourishing. Inhabitants of its coastal towns and river ports had access to news from around the empire, if on a delayed basis because of slow communications. Egypt possessed significant transportation hubs, even though the majority of its inhabitants were rustics who lived by agriculture and, to a lesser extent, pastoralism.[11] The remaining pagan elements on its periphery had probably been converted to Christianity by the late sixth century, and its cities no longer harbored pagans who were willing to declare their allegiances openly. Egypt's coasts and river shores provided opportunities for contact with travelers and merchants from other shores of the Mediterranean. Egyptians were still making pilgrimages in the early seventh century to venerate relics and religious sites in Palestine. Their visits contributed a measure of cosmopolitanism to the province. Those regions were still part of a larger late antique cultural world. Some rough and non-Christianized tribes still occasionally raided and terrorized communities such as Scete on the western edge of the desert as late as the 630s.[12]

While Egypt was not the catalyst for the seminal political and military events of the early seventh century,[13] it did assume an important role in the broader Byzantine imperial economy in terms of agriculture, commerce and artisanal production. Egypt may have contributed as much as 30 percent of total imperial tax revenues from the Prefecture of the East.[14] Egypt was an integral part of the broader Byzantine and Mediterranean economy, and its financial contributions were essential to Byzantine fiscal integrity at the start of the seventh century; its grain contributions were crucial to feeding Constantinople until about 617. During that year Emperor Heraclius

[10] *P. Oxy.* LVI 3872 is an unusual documentary example of travel between Alexandria, Babylon (Old Cairo) and Constantinople; see J. G. Keenan, "A Constantinople Loan, AD 541," *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 29 (1992), 175–82.

[11] J. G. Keenan, "Pastoralism in Roman Egypt," *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 26 (1989), 175–98.

[12] Ugo Zanetti, "La vie de Saint Jean Higoumène de Scété au VIIe siècle," *Analecta Bollandiana* 114 (1996), ch. 20, pp. 338–41, 382–3; Anthony Alcock (ed., trans.), *The Life of Samuel of Kalamun by Isaac the Presbyter*, c. 17–18 (Warminster, 1983), 90–2. Pilgrimages: Papyrus 55, *Greek Papyri of the Byzantine Period*, ed. G. Fantoni [Griechische Texte, X, CPRF, XIV], 107–9.

[13] For overviews, see A. Stratos, *Vyzantion ston z' aiona*, 6 vols. (Athens, 1965–1978); J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge, 1997).

[14] M. Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy* (Cambridge, 1985), 171–2, 613–18.

(610–41), reacting to the Persian conquest of Egypt, suppressed this ancient entitlement. The cancellation of the grain dole, following the loss of Egypt, inflicted hardships on Constantinople's inhabitants. There is no scholarly consensus as to whether Egyptian contributions of grain to Constantinople were temporarily restored after the Byzantine recovery of Egypt in 629 from the Persians.

The Byzantines did care about the fate of Egypt. If one looks at later seventh-century scapegoating, Egypt and its loss loomed large in their eyes. Whether everyone else of importance in the late 630s and 640s concurred is open to question. But a variety of sources attest to the significance of Egypt from Constantinople's point of view, and to acrimonious disputes about why and how it fell to the Muslims. There was, however, another perspective.[15] The Byzantine Empire had already begun to learn what it was like to do without Egypt during the era of the Persian occupation. The empire had managed to survive, but at a great cost in terms of lost prestige, foodstuffs, population, intellectual life, commerce and craft wealth.

Egypt experienced widespread disruption in the final decades of Byzantine administration. The province had become aware of consequences of events outside its borders. First came news of the violent overthrow of Emperor Maurice in 602 by the usurper Phokas. According to the *Life of the Patriarch John the Almsgiver* by Leontios of Neapolis (Cyprus), the report allegedly took only nine days to reach Alexandria from Constantinople, its rapidity an indicator of its urgency. Egypt experienced more fighting and consequent loss of life and property by civilians as well as the military, in conflicts between the armies and partisans of the usurper Phokas and the rebel Heraclius, Exarch of Africa, and his son Heraclius, whose rebellion against Phokas commenced in 608, than did any other Byzantine province in the years 608–610.[16] Only half a dozen years later the Persian invasion interrupted the restoration of stability in Egypt. Egypt returned to Byzantine authority in late 629 but in another five years the Muslim menace became apparent and cast its shadow over Egypt well before Muslim armies actually invaded the province.

A detailed review of the Muslim conquest of Egypt between late 639 and 645 is inappropriate here. The analysis of A. J. Butler is still valuable, but has been superseded with respect to Byzantine sources by new papyrological discoveries, and by a new understanding of the larger Byzantine context and of late Roman history overall. In the case of Arabic sources, many texts have been edited – such as the critical work of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam: *History of the*

[15] W. E. Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests* (revised paperback, Cambridge, 1995), 205, 217. See also D. M. Olster, *Roman Defeat, Christian Response, and the Literary Construction of the Jew* (Philadelphia, 1994).

[16] D. M. Olster, *The Politics of Usurpation in the Seventh Century* (Amsterdam, Las Palmas, 1993).

Conquest of Egypt, about which Butler and Leone Caetani had only imperfect knowledge – and newer critical methodologies in approaching the texts and their tradents have been developed.[17]

Egypt's Byzantine defense forces in the early seventh century, including irregulars, may have numbered 25–30,000 – roughly the same size as earlier Roman contingents stationed there. These were not elite troops; most were probably of Egyptian origin. Maritime communications were the principal means by which Egypt and Constantinople remained in contact. Byzantium controlled the Mediterranean and had the capacity to shift elite troops by sea to Egypt from districts surrounding Constantinople. Other strong forces might be sent from Numidia overland or from Syria-Palestine, either by land (the Via Maris) or by sea, in ships that skirted the Mediterranean coast.[18] One may wonder how easily troops from the Balkans or Thrace could have adjusted to unfamiliar military service conditions in Egypt (climate, health, terrain, diet, availability and quality of water). Byzantine military forces garrisoned in Egypt had never been the empire's best troops, who were not recruited from or stationed there. Egypt was not a major center of Byzantine military unrest, which mostly occurred on its eastern frontier with Persia or in the Balkans.[19]

Echoes of spirituality in Egypt on the eve of the conquest appear in some writings of the hagiographer John Moschus, and in the biographies of Patriarch John the Almsgiver (610–19) and the Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria, Benjamin (626–55). Scattered remarks by them indicate the founding of new churches and dedications in Egypt, and the appeal of Christian saints, festivals and bishops. At the end of Byzantine rule, Christian values still caused a banker to drop his career for an ecclesiastic calling.[20]

The Heraclian dynasty (610–11), or some of its members, hoped for assistance from north Africa, just as Heraclians had previously resisted the usurper Emperor Phokas (602–10) and had stood firm against the Persians who had overrun Egypt (617–29). In Egypt it is possible that some might

[17] Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr*, ed. Charles C. Torrey (New Haven, 1922). The absence until 1922 of this critical edition is significant. See esp. vol. 4 of L. Caetani, *Annali dell'Islam*, 10 vols. (Milan, U. Hoepli, 1905–26; reprint, Hildesheim, 1972).

[18] Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, 40; J. Maspero, *Organisation militaire de l'Égypte byzantine* (Paris, 1912), 117–18; Kaegi, "Byzantine Logistics: Problems and Perspectives," in J. Lynn (ed.), *Feeding Mars* (Boulder, 1993), 39–55; Jean Gascou, "L'Institution des bucellaires," *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'Archéologie Orientale au Caire*, 76 (1976), 143–56; O. Schmitt, "Die *Bucellarii*. Eine Studie zum militärischen Gefolgschaftswesen in der Spätantike," *Tyche*, 9 (1994), 147–74.

[19] W. E. Kaegi, *Byzantine Military Unrest, 471–843: An Interpretation* (Amsterdam, Las Palmas, 1981).

[20] Stephanos Efthymiadis, "Living in a City and Living in a Scetis: The Dream of Eustathios the Banker," *Byzantinische Forschungen*, 21 (1995), 11–29.

have regarded north Africa as a possible bulwark against invasion, because the Persians had not overrun that region. The Heraclian dynasty had, after all, emerged from north Africa to seize imperial power, and this last fact might have encouraged some observers to look west, however unrealistically, for military rescue.

With due regard for lacunae in the primary sources on the Islamic conquest, many scholars would argue that they are superior to those for the conquest of Syria or Mesopotamia. In some respects historians of the Arab conquest of Egypt are better informed because of more diverse primary sources than for Syria and Palestine; some papyri have survived, as have contemporary Christian sources such as John of Nikiu.[21] On the other hand, the Muslim Iraqi tradents did not pay as much attention to Egypt as to Iraq.

[21] Jean Gascou, "De Byzance à l'Islam," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 26 (1983), 97–109. It is inappropriate here to survey papyri in detail, but among the important ones of relevance, there are esp. *P. Oxy.* LVIII3959, in J. R. Rea (ed.), *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, Egypt Exploration Society, Graeco-Roman Memoirs, 78 (London, 1991), 58: 116–18, dated to 620 CE; but see also others in series 3940–62, esp. 74–129; also papyrus 4132 in T. Gagos et al. (eds.), *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, vol. 61, Graeco-Roman Memoirs, 81 (1995), 137–38; *P. Sorb.* II 69 in Jean Gascou, *Un codex fiscal Hermopolite (P. Sorb. II 69)*, American Studies in Papyrology, 32 (Atlanta, 1994); *P. Hamb.* 56 (on which see Roger Rémondon, "P. Hamb. 56 et P. Lond. 1419 (notes sur les finances d'Aphrodito du VIe siècle au VIIIe siècle)," *Chronique d'Égypte* 40 (1965), 401–30; early seventh-century archive of Makarios, Arsinoite nome, on which see Georgina Fantoni (ed.), vol. 10, *Greek Papyri of the Byzantine Period, Corpus Papyrorum Raineri* (*CPRF*) XIV, 62–75 and papyrus 55, 107–8 (Vienna 1989); archive of Philemon and Thekla (622–47 CE), on which see A. A. Schiller, "The Budge Coptic Papyrus of Columbia University and Related Greek Papyri of the British Museum," *Actes du Xe Congrès International des Papyrologues* (Warsaw, 1964), 193–200; early seventh-century archive of John the *apaitêtês*, Arsinoite nome, on which see Monika Hasitzka, Michael Müller, B. Palme et al., *Corpus Papyrorum Raineri* vol. 10, *Griechische Texte* 7 (1986), 21–56; early seventh-century archive of Aurelius Pachymios, Panopolis [Akhmīm, in upper Egypt, north of Luxor], in Friedrich Preisigke et al. *Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten* (*SB*) 1: 4503–5, 374–376 (Strasbourg, 1915); and papyri from the Monastery of Epiphanius published by W. E. Crum, H. E. Winlock, *The Monastery of Epiphanius* (New York, 1926), I–II; *BGU* 314 [Herakleopolis]; 370 [Arsinoe] = *Ägyptische Urkunden aus den Königlichen Museen zu Berlin, Griechische Urkunden* (Berlin, 1895–98), I, II; *P. Ross.* iii, 51; *SB* 4662, 9461; *P. Lond.* i, 113, 6 (b), F. G. Kenyon (ed.), *Greek Papyri in the British Museum* (London, 1893), 1: 214–15; *P. Flor.* 306 in Girolamo Vitelli (ed.), *Papiri Greci Egizii*, 3: *Papiri Fiorentini* (Milan, 1915), No. 306, p. 40 [Oct/Nov 635] *SB* 4488; *P. Lond.* 1012, in Kenyon, *Greek Papyri in the British Museum*, 3, 265–267; *P. Lond.* 113, 10, in Kenyon, *Greek Papyri in the British Museum*, 1: 222–224; *SB* 6271 (Berlin, 1926): 44–45, which is dated 640/641, from Apollonos Magna [Idfu, in the Thebaid]; esp. *P. Lond.* 113, 10; *CPRF* 556; *SB* 9748=*CPRF* 552; *SB* 9749=*CPRF* 553; *SB* 9755=*CPRF* 554; *SB* 9751=*CPRF* 559; *SB* 9752=*CPRF* 560; *SB* 9753=*CPRF* 561, from Friedrich Preisigke, F. Bilabel, contd. by Emil Kiessling, *Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten* (Wiesbaden, 1965), 8: 86–9, 89–90; all of these last are from Herakleopolis Magna, or modern Ihnāsīyat al-madīna, in the Fayyūm area.

Similar problems emerge in evaluating Muslim traditions concerning Egypt as in other early Islamic traditions. Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam (d. 871) is a relatively early compiler, and his account depends on an Egyptian school of traditionists. As we learn from Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam's *History*, Ibn Lahīʿa (715–790) preserved early traditions of this school for the final moments of Byzantine Egypt.[22]

Christian historians in Egypt were writing long after these events. John of Nikiu, a contemporary, was an exception, but his text has survived in a faulty Ethiopic transmission.[23] Byzantine chroniclers such as Nikephoros and Theophanes[24] do not draw directly on Egyptian sources, but instead use materials such as the work of Theophilus of Edessa that were probably compiled in northern Syria or Constantinople. These sources transmit traditions that tend to represent events in terms of personalities. Latin sources are of little assistance. However important they are for other aspects of seventh-century history, Armenian sources, such as Sebeos, barely mention Egypt. Greek hagiography provides broader information, but does not clarify aspects of the context of the Islamic conquests. Archaeology and its ancillary disciplines – epigraphy, sigillography, and numismatics – illuminate some of this context but do not clarify complex questions of chronology or historical interpretation. The result is an impressionistic picture. Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam provides traditions that correlate with those of Theophanes (so-called Theophanes, or George the Syncellus).

Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam claims that Heraclius stiffened Byzantine resistance in Egypt, while Theophanes reports that Heraclius had replaced civilian leaders such as John Kateas in Osrhoene with Ptolemais and Patriarch Kyros with Manuel. Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam provides names of traditionists who preserved that memory. His tradents from the Egyptian school provide a powerful group tradition, although the numbers of its practitioners do not necessarily insure its accuracy. These include Yaḥyā ibn Ayyūb, who died in 784, and Khālid ibn Ḥumayd, who died in 785/6. These last two are early and well regarded. The tradition that Heraclius sought to forbid civilian authorities from making separate peace terms with the Muslims without previous explicit approval from him is plausible. Such traditions, of course, also helped to preserve the prestige of the Heraclian dynasty, foisting blame on

[22] R. G. Khoury, *ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Lahīʿa (97–174/715–790). Juge et grand maître de l'École égyptienne* (Wiesbaden, 1986).

[23] John, Bishop of Nikiu, *Chronicle*, trans. R. M. Charles (Oxford, 1916). On Oriental Christian sources see Micheline Albert, R. Beylot, et al., *Christianismes orientaux. Introduction à l'étude des langues et des littératures* (Paris, 1993).

[24] Nikephoros, *Short History*, ed. and trans. C. Mango (Washington, 1990); Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1883); *Chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor*, trans. C. Mango and R. Scott (Oxford, 1997). L. I. Conrad, "Theophanes and the Arabic Historical Transmission: Some Indications of Intercultural Transmission," *Byzantinische Forschungen*, 15 (1990), 1–45.

others for the military reverses and disasters – and the loss of territory, and human or financial resources, but Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam was no tool of a Heraclian propaganda machine. Nevertheless, there may be some relevance of this tradition to later juridical claims that the Muslims acquired Egypt by conquest, making those territories subject to higher taxes.

The sources warrant caution. They do not give reliable statistics and are frequently vague. No direct archival material survives in Egypt, Constantinople or Cyprus that treats the critical communications between the Byzantine imperial government and its leaders in Egypt on the eve of the conquests. Nor are there archival materials that indicate policy decisions of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, commander of the Muslim victors. Instead we have later compilations of traditions which often reflect the tradents' other agenda or their sources. These traditions are often overly simplistic and tend to attribute too much responsibility to personalities. There is also a tendency for Muslim sources to report, at a later date, events in a scheme of classification that makes sense only in terms of later juridical interpretations or disputes that were historically inappropriate for Egypt in the 630s and 640s. Noth plausibly believes that ʿAmr invaded Egypt on his own initiative, not on the authorization of Caliph ʿUmar.[25]

Surviving Byzantine sources at Constantinople probably owe some of their information to Arab Christian traditions and transmission. They are so fragmentary in their coverage that it would be impossible to understand the Muslim conquests of Egypt by relying exclusively on them.[26] Nor do collections of Greek epistolography, sermons, speeches, or other literature fill in the gap. Muslim sources, for their part, do not rely on credible Christian or Byzantine sources. Coptic Christian sources reveal their own biases. John of Nikiu provides the most reliable account, which may be supplemented with the histories of Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam and al-Ṭabarī, saints' lives or papyri. The Christian Arab historian Eutychius (Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq) provides a late and confused version of the conquest. Although some hagiographic traditions exist, they do not celebrate any Christian martyrs who fought to the death defending Egypt against the Muslims. The only such traditions are from Gaza and they provide no new insights. In contrast to the Martyrs of Gaza, there is no record of Christian martyrs of the initial Muslim invasion of Egypt.[27]

[25] A. Noth, with L. I. Conrad, trans. M. Bonner, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Study* (Princeton, Darwin, 1994), 183–4. Important also is Av. Cameron and L. I. Conrad (eds.), *Problems in the Literary Source Material*, The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, 1 (Princeton, 1992), for many relevant papers.

[26] F. M. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton, 1981).

[27] H. Delehaye, "Passio sanctorum sexaginta martyrum," *Analecta Bollandiana*, 3 (1904), 289–307; J. Pargoire, "Les LX soldats martyrs de Gaza," *Échos d'Orient*, 8 (1905), 40–3.

The Emperor Heraclius did not visit Egypt, nor had any of his recent predecessors. How did that fact affect Egypt's fate? Heraclius's family was of Armenian extraction, with some familiarity with conditions of service in northern Syria, Mesopotamia, the upper Euphrates and Africa Proconsularis, but not Egypt. Presumably, Heraclius's impression of Egypt would have relied in part on information from his cousin Niketas, who had reconquered it in 608–10, taking it from partisans of the usurper Phokas. Niketas presumably also reported to Heraclius his observations about the positive and negative features of Egypt with respect to war against an opponent from the east who occupied Syria-Palestine. Niketas's opinions derived from his recent experiences in winning a civil war against Bonosus, Phokas's general, and his own abandonment of Egypt to the Persian invaders.[28] Whether the historian Theophylact Simocatta, who hailed from Egypt and wrote at the court, spoke with Heraclius and his entourage about Egypt cannot be ascertained. But there were probably other Egyptians in Heraclius's entourage. Heraclius probably acquired better information from Niketas about Egypt than had his predecessors, who did not benefit from a trusted cousin's recent service there. Toward the end of his life, Heraclius was probably exercising his authority as emperor only intermittently: a worsening medical condition impeded his efforts to make rational decisions.

Egypt remained a vital source of revenues to Constantinople, despite the loss of grain for the city, but one ponders the accuracy of information to the government in Constantinople about Egypt's situation, political, military or ecclesiastical. How much the Byzantine leadership knew about the Muslim invaders and their leadership in Medina is speculative, and the predominant perceptions of the Byzantine leaders probably derived from rumors, fear and confused reports from refugees. The Senate emerged as an important institution at Constantinople during this era, but the nature of its members' knowledge about Egypt is a mystery.

The consequences of the Persian occupation are complex.[29] The initial invasion inflicted little physical damage. The Persians' evacuation of Egypt was peaceful, following the July 629 agreement at Arabissos (southeast Anatolia) between Heraclius and Shahrbarāz, the Persian general who had conquered Egypt but who then nurtured other ambitions in Persia. The Persians seem to have departed swiftly, perhaps within two months of the

[28] On Niketas 7, sv. Nicetas, see F. R. Martindale, *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire III* (Cambridge, 1992), 940–943; C. Mango, "A Byzantine Hagiographer at Work: Leontios of Neapolis," *Sitzungsberichte, Österreichische Akad. d. Wiss., philosoph.-hist. Kl.*, 434 (1984), 25–41.

[29] I owe much to the 1992 University of Chicago seminar paper of T. M. Hickey, "Observations on the Sasanian Invasion and Occupation of Egypt," now being revised for publication.

629 agreement.[30] The dearth of primary sources prohibits a more precise date, and the size of the Persian military occupation force also defies estimation. The best Persian troops had probably left Egypt by July 629 to accompany Shahrbarāz to the Cilician Gates and the vicinity of Alexandretta. No more than a skeletal occupation force of Persians remained in Egypt, even at the time of Shahrbarāz's meeting with Heraclius at distant Arabissos in that month. Impending friction between Shahrbarāz and the Sasanian monarch Khusraw II probably imperiled shipment of supplies to the Persian forces in Egypt, who feared reprisals or being cut off there, when their situation would have become untenable. Egyptians did not participate in any known effort to cast off Persian rule, and no fear of them caused Shahrbarāz to evacuate Egypt. His decision was part of his larger plan to seize control of Persia for himself and his partisans.

The Persian occupation was disruptive politically, interrupting the continuity of Roman–Byzantine rule, and causing some deterioration of the infrastructure. We have few details on the precise organization of the Byzantine army in Egypt after the Byzantines reoccupied the province. If the situation in Egypt parallels that in Palestine, there may have been an effort to restore the situation to what it was immediately before the Persian invasion, but not to reimpose any radical reorganization or reform. Unlike their presence in Syria or upper Mesopotamia, there are no reports of Persian troops remaining in Egypt, even as renegades. Egypt was physically more remote from Persia, and Persian soldiers would have been more vulnerable there if they had wished to remain.

No question persists over Shahrbarāz's conquest of Egypt, although many specifics are unclear. The chronology of his dispute with Khusraw II is poorly understood: in all likelihood tensions grew unbearable for Shahrbarāz after the end of the 626 siege of Constantinople by Avars and the Persians. It is also uncertain how Shahrbarāz's overtures to Heraclius and alienation from Khusraw II affected Egypt and its population, but they probably resulted in a reduction of violence on the part of Persian troops. This cannot be documented, however. While Shahrbarāz's actions probably aroused both Melkite and Coptic hopes, his eyes were on Heraclius and a return on his part to triumph in Persia rather than on local improvements in relations with Egyptians. No one claims that Egyptian geopolitical issues motivated Shahrbarāz's dispute with Khusraw II or his decision to cooperate with Heraclius. Heraclius could not easily ignore Shahrbarāz's overtures, although it is plausible that he remained skeptical of Shahrbarāz's sincerity or future decisions. Shahrbarāz shifted his tactics in the Byzantine–Persian

[30] W. E. Kaegi and P. M. Cobb, "Heraclius, al-Ṭabarī and Shahrbarāz," to appear in the proceedings of the 1995 University of St. Andrews conference on al-Ṭabarī, ed. H. Kennedy.

conflict when he departed Egypt and drew near to the war's centers. Egypt remained important, but its strategic significance did not equal that of northern Syria or upper Mesopotamia for expeditionary armies of the two protagonists. The news of Shahrbarāz's assassination in Persia (633) probably evoked no reaction in Egypt, where he no longer wielded any power.

Egypt remained relatively prosperous after the Persian departure. The resumption of coastal trading and the end of the Persian occupation helped to revive the economy of Alexandria and other coastal towns, and trade also facilitated the spread of news both true and false. Egyptians had not considered the Persians to be welcome masters. One can speculate that various Arabs, some of whom may have served as couriers and interpreters, had learned much about the Persian occupation and evacuation of Egypt. The Persian troops under Shahrbarāz who had formerly served in Egypt but subsequently moved to northern Syria and Mesopotamia, had probably disseminated information, exposing vulnerabilities and opportunities. Arab communities which lay astride the lines of Persian communications between Egypt and Mesopotamia probably learned about conditions in Egypt and passed on some of that information.[31] It is uncertain whether tentative Byzantine efforts to open gold mines in the Eastern Desert (most notably, Bi'r Umm Fawākhīr) in Justinian's reign had continued into Heraclius's. But the abortive efforts of the sixth century may have left some expectation of great mineral wealth in Egypt even after the mining ceased. Rumors about it could have added to the material temptations for a Muslim invasion.[32]

The leading church officials in Egypt were Cyrus/Kyros, the Monothelete Patriarch of Alexandria, who arrived from Phasis in 630/31 – the Muqawqis of Arabic traditions – and Benjamin, the Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria after 626. The two intensely disliked each other. Because he is remembered as an oppressor, it is difficult to assess Kyros accurately. There is no way to evaluate the veracity of later reports that the Prophet had summoned Kyros, among other political leaders, to Islam. However, it is plausible that Kyros, as Byzantine governor and patriarch, paid tribute to the Muslims to forestall invasion. It is also plausible that 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ, who led the Muslim conquest, accepted such funds. Kyros's efforts to make peace with 'Amr necessitated commercial taxes. The fact that Kyros could contemplate raising so much money through these taxes is an indication of the vitality and volume of commerce in the 630s. Furthermore, the dozen or so years of Sasanian occupation had not irrevocably damaged such trade. Stories that 'Amr first saw Egypt while on a trading visit underscore the commercial

[31] Fundamental on the Arabs on the eve of the Muslim conquests, including their roles as intermediaries: I. Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, 2 vols. (Washington, 1995).

[32] Carol Meyer, "A Byzantine Gold-Mining Town in the Eastern Desert of Egypt: Bir Umm Fawakhir, 1992–1993," *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 8 (1995), 192–224.

importance of Egypt and the familiarity of some Arabs with it. Trade had revived sufficiently by the end of the 630s that Kyros believed he could garner substantial funds from it. In his own mind, raising taxes would not do undue damage to life, stability or values in Egypt. The later Christian Arab historians Agapius and Severus also claim that Kyros secured a truce for three years in return for tribute payments. Their source presumably derived from the work of Theophanes/George Syncellus. An early tradent, Ḥārith ibn Yazīd al-Ḥaḍramī (d. ca. 700), reports via Ibn Lahī'a, according to Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, that Abū Bakr made a peace arrangement with Kyros for Egypt immediately before the conquests of Syria.[33] This would not be inconsistent with other reports in the histories of Nikephoros, Theophanes, Michael the Syrian, and Agapius, who draw on Theophilus of Edessa.[34]

It is significant that the Persian evacuation of Egypt did not result from any Byzantine campaign from north Africa or from any Byzantine naval actions against its coasts, let alone any naval landings. Instead it resulted from actions at the center of gravity – in upper Mesopotamia and northern Syria and the Caucasus – and a political revolution that brought the Emperor Heraclius and the Persian general Shahrbarāz together. So other than offering troops, supplies, and other resources from the defense of Palestine and Syria against the Persians, earlier historical precedents did not offer any clear indication as to how Egypt might defeat the new Muslim conquerors of Syria. There was no easy formula to grasp.

The role of religious strife in Byzantine Egypt deserves attention, especially given Kyros's prominence in it. Coptic memory of the end of Byzantine rule is filled with recollections of persecution during Benjamin's long patriarchate. Coptic literature contains hostile references to Arabs, before and after the conquest, indicating that not every Copt welcomed Arabs as deliverers. And some who originally did soon changed their opinions. It is risky to assume that later Coptic attitudes were also those of the time of the original conquest. Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam includes a tradition in his history that the dissident Patriarch, Benjamin, made separate arrangements with 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ. We know from him and from the Byzantine historians Theophanes and Nikephoros that Heraclius rejected the terms Kyros had made and deposed him, probably early in 640.[35] The inclusion of this tradition in Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam's history does not guarantee its truth, but merely that it was deemed worthy of reporting in light of the late ninth-century situation. Some Copts of this later period may have interpreted events in the same

[33] Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr*, 53.

[34] Nikephoros, *Short History* 23, 70–73, 189 (Mango); Theophanes, A.M. 6126 (De Boor I, 338); 469–71 (Mango); Michael the Syrian, *Chronique*, ed. trans. J.-B. Chabot, 4 vols. (Paris, 1899–1910), II, 425; Agapius of Membij, *Patrologia Orientalis* 8: 471–74.

[35] Nikephoros, *Short History*, 189.

way, as the contemporary testimony by John of Nikiu suggests. Respective transmissions of traditions may have distorted what really happened.

As the Muslim conquest of Palestine progressed between 634 and 637, separation of Egypt by land from the core of Byzantine territory in western Asia only made it more difficult to devise a solid land defense. Such a tactic had not worked when the Persians overran Palestine and Syria in the early 600s, and while the Byzantines did not learn from this experience, the Muslims had. 'Amr had conquered Gaza in 637, if we believe the account of the Sixty Martyrs of Gaza. While in southern Palestine 'Amr had time to learn about Egypt and was strategically placed to take advantage of Persian vulnerabilities there. He could also prevent any other Muslim commander from exploiting the situation. It is conceivable that 'Amr had made a provisional arrangement with Kyros of Alexandria, and that in return for monetary payments he held off from invading or raiding Egypt. The logistical problems of maintaining communications and supplies for troops operating in Egypt were not insuperable when the Muslims controlled Gaza and its environs. Outposts such as Nessana on the edge of the Negev may no longer have been manned. Some of their occupants were of partial Arab background, if one can trust their known names. Possession of Palestine gave the potential initiative and a range of options to the Muslims.

Some Byzantine troops from Palestine fled into Egypt after the Byzantine defeat there at the hands of the Muslims between 634 and 637, but we neither know their precise numbers nor can identify their units. Given their defeat by the Muslims, those Byzantine troops and their leaders were too demoralized to repel the Muslims from Egypt, nor had they learned from their debacles in Syria and Palestine to make any significant contribution to their forces defending the province. Their behavior when they retreated into Egypt is unclear. The Muslim invasion itself followed the Byzantine loss of most of Palestine and Syria;[36] only a few coastal points were still holding out against the Muslims on the Syro-Palestinian coast at its inception. The invasion of Egypt made their retention even more perilous and ultimately irrelevant, and a dynamic of Muslim military success was already evident.

The Byzantine government faced another challenge. There was no great general whom it could trust to devise a successful defense. No officer emerged from the disarray of Byzantine forces to win renown or to show leadership potential. Admittedly, conditions in Egypt contrasted with those in Syria, nor were the soldiery similar. Armenians had served prominently in Syria and Mesopotamia, and friendly Arab tribesmen constituted a large portion of the Byzantine forces there. In Egypt, the ethnic mix seems to have differed. Many local levies were of dubious quality. Some troops from

[36] For a summary of events see P. M. Fraser, "Arab Conquest of Egypt," in A. S. Atiya (ed.), *Coptic Encyclopedia*, 8 vols., I (New York, 1991), 183–89.

adjacent parts of north Africa served in Egypt, although not as many as the government had wished. Some forces were transported by sea from Thrace, but their adjustment to local conditions may have been difficult.

The overall effect of the Muslim successes in Palestine and Syria, especially the fall of Jerusalem and other holy places, cannot have been positive, especially after Heraclius had restored the presumed fragments of the Cross to their rightful places. Problems of morale were probably created within Egypt for both the army and civilians.[37]

Byzantine military commanders were at odds personally, and disagreed over whether to make terms with the Muslims or to persist in violent resistance. Domentianus, brother-in-law to Kyros, concurred with him about the advisability of trying to reach an accommodation with the Muslims, but these commanders were occasionally inconsistent, or at least opportunistic. Domentianus was later inclined to honor General Valentinus and the advisors surrounding the eleven-year-old Emperor Constans II at Constantinople, who took a hard line. John of Barka, Marianos and others also favored resistance, as did Manuel when he was dispatched to Egypt.[38] The rationale within the military for Egypt's defense is not well understood. The existence of cleavage is clearly important because it drained support and strength for a coherent resistance, and also convinced Muslims that theirs was the winning side.

Disputes among civilian, ecclesiastical and military leaders did not account for all internal Byzantine divisions. Serious problems had emerged at the imperial capital, Constantinople. The death of Heraclius at the beginning of 641 paralyzed Byzantine resistance.[39] Even the Muslim tradents Yaḥyā ibn Ayyūb (d. 784) and Khālid ibn Ḥumayd reported such a tradition. The regency of Heraclius's widow, Martina, preferred a more moderate stance toward the Muslims than did some other factions at the court. No confidential memoranda or archival materials survive from Constantinople or Egypt concerning this important policy issue. The position taken by Martina's faction can be explained by a fear that her regency was vulnerable to deposition at the hands of a soldier-emperor if fighting intensified or if the government suffered further defeats on the battlefield. Martina, her sons and partisans could ill afford another Yarmūk, yet there was a real danger of another occurring. The regency, in that dangerous period when there were minor children of a controversial union, needed an interval in which stability could be gained and consolidated. In addition the government did not want to be in the position of having to assume responsibility for the further loss of important territory. The personal

[37] See B. Flusin, *Saint Anastase le Perse et l'histoire de la Palestine au début du VII siècle* (Paris, 1992), II, 151–72.

[38] On these generals, see Martindale, *Prosopography*, 408–9, 704, 829, 811.

[39] D. Misiu, *He diatheke tou Herakleiou* (Thessaloniki, 1985).

opinions about Egypt on the part of the Constantinopolitan Patriarch Pyrrhos, Empress Martina or her sons are unknown.[40] Martina's attitudes were probably formed in the circles of Heraclius's family. She had personal knowledge of Syria, but not of Egypt.

Philagrios, the powerful Koubikoularios (imperial palace chamberlain) and Sakellarios (treasurer), urged support for Heraclius's son, Heraclius Constantine III, and grandson, Constans II (descending from his first marriage to the late Fabia/Eudocia).[41] He used his financial influence to win support of critical military elements with the help of his aide, the ambitious Armenian officer Valentinos. This individual was based at Constantinople in the service of Heraclius Constantine and Constans.[42] The treasury of the *sacellum* was in the ascendant in the seventh century, following the disintegration of the old praetorian prefecture and its financial structure. The struggle for succession was acrimonious, and distracted the imperial government from any coherent effort to save Egypt.

It is unclear whether Philagrios ever managed to enforce a new census for the entire empire ordered by Heraclius just before his death, or whether he even implemented it in Egypt.[43] Its likely date, 640, happens to coincide approximately with the recall of Kyros and his ensuing exile. The issue at hand was not simply the loss of revenues to the Muslims, but also a powerful internal bureaucratic quarrel about the effort to initiate a new census. Kyros claimed that he would impose a new commercial tax to compensate for the loss of revenues to the Muslims. However, any expedient would have weakened the bureaucratic controls of Philagrios in Constantinople, and so met resistance. There thus was a complex set of fiscal factors involved.

Heraclius's wrath against Kyros may have been intensified by Philagrios pressing him, for his own reasons, to reject any initiatives devised by Kyros, since they would enable local officials in Egypt to gain more autonomy. If true, this perspective was myopic. But Kyros and other local officials might well have resented Philagrios's efforts to extend such an unfamiliar measure as a census to Egypt. The creation of a new census would have offered many opportunities for the central bureaucracy in Constantinople to consolidate its control over Egypt, and would have threatened many constituencies that extended beyond Kyros's circle. No Egyptian source mentions this measure. Philagrios and Kyros were opponents for reasons probably connected to

[40] On Martina see Martindale, *Prosopography*, 837–38; on Pyrrhos see J. L. Van Dieten, *Geschichte der Patriarchen von Sergios I bis Johannes VI* (Amsterdam, 1972), 57–105.

[41] F. R. Martindale, s.v. Philagrius, *Prosopography*, 1018.

[42] Nikephoros, *Short History* 29, 78–81, 188–89.

[43] See *Synopsis Chronike*, ed. C. Sathas, in his *Mesaionike Bibliotheke* 7, VII (Paris, 1894) 110 (reprint Athens, 1972, VII, 1–556); Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, 257–258, 287. On Philagrios' support for Constans II see Nikephoros, *Short History*, 189.

rivalries over control of revenues and spheres of influence. There is no reason to doubt John of Nikiu's information about this antagonism. Philagrios supported members of the Heraclian family whose support depended on military leaders who found it in their interest to advocate strong military resistance to the Muslims, especially in Asia Minor. These disputes in Constantinople distracted the government, and contributed to the failure of a sound defense strategy for Egypt.

Egypt's size and remoteness from Constantinople also complicated its defense. One may reasonably ask whether any strategy would have succeeded once the loss of Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia blocked contact by land between Egypt and Anatolia and Constantinople. That loss also deprived Byzantium of contact with friendly Arab Christian tribes who in the past had served as a shield against hostile Arabs. If Egypt was to be protected from Muslim Arab invaders, it would be necessary to find the right troops and to devise effective strategies. Judging from the Mauricius *Strategikon* of ca. 600, the extant military manuals provided no easy formulae.

The Blue and Green circus factions of Constantinople also existed in late Byzantine Egypt, as literary texts and inscriptions attest. Some scholars have emphasized religious sectarianism and the role of these factions, identifying the Greens with resistance to Islam and the Blues with readiness to avoid a military confrontation. These interpretations are simplistic and unpersuasive. An argument that those previous partisans of the Circus Factions explain the fall of Egypt is unconvincing.[44] It is incorrect to attribute to the factions any significant role; they may not have made any positive contribution to Egypt's defense, but they were not the cause of its failure.

It is incorrect to assume that all Monophysite Egyptians supported the Muslims against the Byzantines.[45] The situation was more complex. Some Egyptians did collaborate and rapidly converted to Islam, but Muslim victories cannot be simply ascribed to help from Egyptian collaborators. The Muslims possessed excellent military commanders and a coherent purpose, while everyone agrees that the Byzantine political, ecclesiastical and military authorities in Egypt and Constantinople were mired in bitter rivalries that proved ruinous to their chances. Previous massacres of Christians by the Persians, and the rapid surrender of many Palestinian towns to Muslims in

[44] J. Jarry, "L'Égypte et l'invasion musulmane," *Annales Islamologiques*, 6 (1966), 1–29; Z. Borkowski, *Alexandrie II: Inscriptions des factions* (Warsaw, 1981); A. Cameron, *Circus Factions* (Oxford, 1977); but cf. Jean Gascou, "Les institutions de l'hippodrome en Égypte byzantine," *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale au Caire*, 76 (1976), 185–212.

[45] Correct is F. Winkelmann, "Ägypten und Byzanz vor der arabischen Eroberung," *Byzantinoslavica*, 40 (1979), 161–82, reprinted in his *Studien zu Konstantin den Grossen und zur byzantinischen Kirchengeschichte*, ed. W. Brandes and J. Haldon (Birmingham, UK, 1993).

the 630s probably induced the Byzantines to reach a peaceful settlement with the Muslims in Egypt. Rumors about possible atrocities may have intensified this propensity.

There was no coherent plan to arm the Egyptian population, or for rapid training in the use of arms so that the populace could resist. Acquiring sufficient wood for fashioning weapons itself posed problems. Civilians were most likely to participate in local defense by helping to repair canals or man walls against invaders. There were precedents in Palestine, Syria and Upper Mesopotamia of local authorities making separate peace during the Persian invasions of the sixth and early seventh centuries, as well as during the Muslim invasions of the 630s. It is not surprising that Egyptians behaved similarly. There was no desire among the local population for fighting to the death to save their town or district from occupation. One cannot trust later traditions about terms of surrender, which may involve post-hoc juristic reasoning rather than historical realities.

Their long-held conviction that the Arabs were unable to besiege walled towns may have blinded the Byzantines to their own vulnerabilities during the Muslim invasion. In Egypt, as in Syria, some walled towns held out longer against the invaders than did regions. The early fall of the fortress of Babylon (Old Cairo) to the Muslims placed them in a strong strategic position; they were able to cut off Upper Egypt from the Delta. Again by a process of "blinding," they made it virtually impossible for any defense of Upper Egypt to be conducted coherently, since those who might resist in the south could learn only with difficulty about the central government's efforts in Constantinople. Egypt had to attempt its defense in the absence of good communications with other Byzantine forces, except by land and sea with Numidia or other parts of north Africa.

Egypt had provided financial support for military operations in Syria and many earlier campaigns. The imposition of a heavy tribute on the province temporarily forestalled a Muslim invasion. But the payment of such a huge tribute deprived Byzantine Syria of the means previously available to aid its defense. In this way, the fortunes of Egypt and Syria were intertwined during the early Islamic conquests. Whether this was a conscious plan on the Muslims' part or not, its consequences were serious.

In May 655, the Monotheletic government of Emperor Constans II (641–68) accused the zealous Chalcedonian monk Maximus the Confessor, exiled in Africa since 633, of discouraging a Byzantine commander, Peter, from moving Numidian troops to rescue Egypt. He was held responsible for the loss of that great province to the Muslims.[46] Such scapegoating is a reminder of how important was Egypt's loss. It is plausible that the

[46] *Relatio motionis factae inter domnum abbatem Maximum et socium ejus atque principes in secretario*, ed. J. P. Migne, Patrologia Graeca 90, 112–113.

government of Heraclius had attempted to move troops from Numidia against the Muslim invaders of Egypt in response to the first reports of restiveness among Arabs in nearby regions of the Arabian peninsula, on the eve of the more powerful Muslim penetrations into Palestine and Syria. This indicates that there was some perceived Arab threat to Egypt as early as 633, even though there was no substantial invasion until 639. This threat further reinforces the veracity of reports that Patriarch Kyros purchased some temporary relief from Muslim invasions.

The defeat and death of General John Barkaines (Barka was one Byzantine term for al-Marj, in Cyrenaica) early in the Muslim invasion may provide another indication that some troops from areas west of Egypt participated in its defense at the end of Heraclius's reign. John Barkaines died at the battle of 'Ayn Shams (Heliopolis), near modern Cairo, probably in July 640. The reported size of both Muslim and Byzantine armies are suspect. Some scholars doubt that John Barkaines came from Barka or that his presence indicated any participation of troops from Byzantine-controlled regions west of Egypt. But given the earlier Heraclian conquest of Egypt from coastal areas in Libya and Carthage, and given accusations that efforts to send relief forces from the west (with which Maximus the Confessor allegedly interfered) were sabotaged, that skepticism seems excessive.

Niketas had already quarreled with John the Almsgiver, Patriarch of Alexandria, about taking control of church funds to help the beleaguered empire and its government.[47] The quarrels between Kyros and Heraclius, or Kyros and Philagrios, seem to have been similar. Tensions were inherent between a wealthy church and a military with an unquenchable thirst for funds. Thus the tensions of 641 paralleled those during the Persian invasion. Niketas had directed the earlier defense of Egypt against the Persians. That had involved a battle at Caesarea, resulting in a truce (613). He had also fought the Persians in northern Syria, near Antioch. Such clashes were part of Syria's defense, but also outer skirmishes to protect Egypt. It was presumably after the failure of those actions that Niketas withdrew into Egypt and then fled by ship from Alexandria in the face of the Persian invasion. It is unclear what military lessons he learned from his experience.

The loss of Egypt to the Constantinopolitan government had twice negatively affected Syria's defense earlier in the seventh century, by diverting the attention of its protectors and by removing Egypt's financial resources from its support in 610 during Heraclius's revolt against Phokas. The occupation by Shahrbarāz and the Arab conquest soon followed. However, in neither case did the loss of Egypt permanently impair the defense of

[47] Leontios of Neapolis, *Vie de Syméon le Fou et Vie de Jean de Chypre*, ed. trans. A. J. Festugière (Paris, 1974), 356; V. Déroche, *Études sur Léontios de Néapolis*, Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia, 3 (Uppsala, 1995), 33–36.

Anatolia. The Arab menace with respect to Egypt was always seen as a problem emanating from the Sinai Peninsula, and in addition there was the threat of nomadic incursions from Nubians in the south. Those had imperiled travel, overland commerce and agriculture in certain important regions, but they did not endanger the control of Egypt by the central government, except in the direst moments of the third-century crisis of the Roman Empire when the aggression of Palmyra was at its zenith. Egypt had long maintained contact with Arabs, including those from Sinai. Literary references to Arabs in religious texts do not reveal any new trend culminating in the late sixth or early seventh centuries.[48] Such references are often stereotypic and should be regarded with caution.

Control of the sea and of Egypt's waterways was always essential to the administration of Byzantine Egypt. The sea was the medium for dominating the church in Egypt, for recalling and communicating with patriarchs, for sending troops and supplies, and for extracting funds from Egypt to Constantinople. Egypt was navigationally linked to Cyprus, which remained in Byzantine hands even after Syria fell. That link progressed from Egypt through Cyprus to Rhodes, and from Rhodes to Constantinople. Control of the littoral and such ports as Alexandria/Alexandretta in Syria or western Asia were also of importance, permitting the Byzantines to strike at coastal areas in Egypt occupied by hostile forces. This control did not, however, secure the Egyptian interior very well, especially if a district were distant from Egypt's waterways, since the Byzantines do not appear to have developed techniques of large-scale warfare away from them.

Jean Maspero once observed that the Byzantines lacked unity of command in trying to devise a defense of Egypt.[49] Modern scholars' doubts about Maspero's thesis are unwarranted. There were poor coordination of relief forces, disagreements between their leaders and local defense levies. Maspero noted that the Byzantine forces in Egypt were sufficient for their normal military duties, but that they were inadequate for the task of securing it against the Muslims in the early seventh century. The fortresses and fortifications in themselves were satisfactory.

Modern historians have praised Heraclius for not risking the loss of his remaining armies by trying to retain Egypt. The emperor thus implicitly conceded that the loss of Palestine and Syria doomed the province. The perspective of those who give such praise is, of course, that of Constantinople – not that of Alexandria or Cairo. The Byzantine Empire's strategic needs caused it to concentrate its better troops in northern Syria and upper

[48] Michael Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries from the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian* (Cambridge, 1994), 324–325. Hadrian may have been born in Cyrenaica in the late 630s.

[49] J. Maspero, *Organisation militaire*, 119–23.

Mesopotamia rather than in Egypt.[50] Ordinarily, few elite expeditionary troops of maneuver were stationed there. We know little about events along the Egyptian Red Sea coast in this period, and their significance for broader developments. It is unlikely, for example, that the early negotiation of terms with the Muslims at the northern Red Sea port of Ayla ('Aqaba) by its bishop would have escaped notice by some Egyptians, but there is no recorded evidence of this.[51] Nor is there evidence about the movement of Byzantine troops or vessels along the Red Sea coast in response to the movement of Muslims in the northern Ḥijāz. Likewise, although the Red Sea could have been a conduit for valuable information about events in Arabia to reach Byzantine officials in Egypt, no record has survived that they received such reports and revised their policies accordingly.

Most material in Byzantine military manuals concerning maneuvers and battle formations was inappropriate for conditions in Egypt, especially the Delta.[52] But it was equally so for other parts of the province, in particular the harsh, dry regions away from the Nile. We have no manuals on the use of canals, waterways, marshes or arid districts to deter invaders. On the other hand, the Muslims benefited from knowing more about the Byzantines than their opponents knew about them. Given their control of Palestine, the Muslims were able to keep the Byzantines guessing about their intentions, and whether they planned to strike against Egypt or against Byzantine outposts on the edge of northern Syria, or the route to Anatolia. Byzantium thus faced a strategic dilemma: where does one concentrate the limited supply of remaining troops that requires time and expense to deploy? In Syria-Palestine there is marginal evidence, some epigraphic or parenthetical anecdotes in literary sources, that local elites repaired walls or patrolled districts, activities continuing from the sixth century, but there is no similar evidence for Egypt. Egypt lacked raw materials, especially iron and wood, for manufacturing weapons and military machinery. Supplies of wood probably came from forested areas of the empire, such as southwest Anatolia, the Adriatic coasts, or the Black Sea littoral and its interior.

Urban unrest certainly contributed to the fall of Egypt to the Muslims. Yet what could such unrest have accomplished against them? There were Muslim traditions that the population of Alexandria had twice risen against

[50] Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, 26–87; see also the volume of papers from the 1992 conference on *States, Resources and Armies*, ed. A. Cameron (The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, vol. 3) (Princeton, 1996), esp. J.-M. Carrié, "L'État à la recherche de nouveaux modes de financement des armées (Rome et Byzance, IVe-VIIe siècles)," 27–60.

[51] P. M. Cobb and D. Whitcomb in their respective publications, including Whitcomb's excavations, are elucidating much about this important port.

[52] See G. T. Dennis's editions of *Three Byzantine Military Treatises* (Washington, 1985), and the Maurikios *Strategikon*, trans. G. T. Dennis (Philadelphia, 1984), and his edition of the Greek original, published by the Austrian Academy, Vienna 1981.

the Arabs after the signing of peace terms. Some have imputed the settlement with the Muslims to fatigue on the part of Egypt's leadership stemming from the volatility of local public opinion and exasperation over shifting imperial policies. These views may be credible.

One may guess that, as in Syria, few in Egypt at the beginning believed that the Muslim conquest was irrevocable. But unlike in Syria, the possibility of flight by civilians was not easy. The swift Muslim conquest of the Pentapolis by 643 effectively eliminated the opportunity for overland flight west to Byzantine Africa. It was possible by sea but there was a limit to the number of those ready to take the risk. The earliest attitudes towards Arab Muslims took shape at all levels of Byzantine society in Palestine-Syria, not in Egypt, in the light of the initial contacts between Christians and Muslims. Whatever their accuracy, these attitudes would circulate rapidly in Egypt as well.

The Muslims' invasion of Egypt came at a propitious time for them, when the imperial government found itself rent by internal strife over the succession. Although unintended, the timing was perfect for the Muslims to apply maximum pressure with minimal troops. The conflict between the Treasurer Philagrios and Patriarch Kyros also worked to their advantage. While not causing the political crisis, they profited from it. The imperial postal system was still partially operative in Anatolia early in the seventh century, but whether it still linked Egypt with Constantinople is unclear.[53] There is no evidence for the creation of a new Byzantine "theme" system in Egypt during Heraclius's reign, even though the appointment of Manuel to replace Kyros signified a stronger Byzantine commitment to a military response during the crisis.[54]

The sequence of events throughout the Muslim conquest poses some problems but is less ambiguous than that of the conquest of Syria. 'Amr led his troops past Pelusium (al-Faramā), which he took after a siege of one month, and then through Wādī Tūmīlāt to the eastern side of the Delta. He sought to capture the strategically vital fortress of Babylon so that he could isolate the Delta. Copts reportedly aided him in his capture of Pelusium. After taking Bilbeis and Tendunias, he requested reinforcements from Caliph 'Umar, who sent him another 4,000 troops. (One should suspect reports of round numbers such as 4,000 in Arab historical traditions.) When they arrived, his forces totaled perhaps 15,000. 'Amr triumphed at the battle of 'Ayn Shams north of Tendunias and then besieged Babylon from August/

[53] Jean Gascou, "Les grands domaines," 53–59; Andrea Jördens, *P. Heidelberg* V, in *Vertragliche Regelungen von Arbeiten im späten griechsprachigen Ägypten* (Heidelberg, 1990), 43–48.

[54] W. Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, 279–85. On the themes, see J. Haldon, "Military Service, Military Lands and the Status of Soldiers," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 45 (1993), 1–67.

September 640 until its surrender in April 641. The Patriarch Kyros made a provisional treaty with the Muslims that Heraclius rejected. 'Amr's initial raids into the Delta encountered problems, so he returned to the siege of Babylon. He then proceeded north along the western edge of the Delta, capturing Terenuthis, Nikiu, Kom Sharīk and Sultays before reaching the suburbs of Alexandria at Ḥulwa. The city was placed under siege.

Meanwhile, Kyros returned from temporary exile to Babylon, via Rhodes. Kyros negotiated a general peace in return for payment of tribute and two dīnārs per unconverted male. He was granted an armistice period of eleven months to evacuate all Byzantine troops. 'Amr then extended his control over upper Egypt as far as the Thebaid. Kyros died in March 642. Four years later, Manuel returned with troops to restore Byzantine authority in Alexandria, but he was slain. After their defeat, his troops were again evacuated, leaving the Muslims in permanent control.

It is impossible to estimate accurately the civilian or military casualties on either side during the operations resulting from the conquest. Massacres of civilians on a large scale are unlikely, but smaller ones surely spread terror. There were scattered reports of individuals accepting Islam.

It would be equally futile to attempt an estimate of financial and economic consequences. Intercity trade was surely affected negatively, as was the movement of agricultural products from region to region. No immediate health disaster ensued from refugees crowding into a few densely packed towns.

The Byzantines probably retained their best military units at Constantinople to protect the capital and confront the threat of civil war posed by the ambitious General Valentinos.[55] Other troops would have been concentrated in Anatolia, to stave off a Muslim invasion through the Taurus Mountains. Anatolia was more important to the Byzantine government than Egypt, and the retention of Anatolic and Armenian forces was essential for its defense, so that there could be no option of sending them to Egypt's rescue. Thus the Muslim push on to the Anatolian plateau in 644 may have deterred any serious effort to recover Egypt.

Internal strife in Egypt on the eve of the conquest cannot be ascribed to a single factor. Several sources testify to disagreements between the Melkite Patriarchate and military officials such as Niketas or General Isaakios, on the eve of the Persian invasion several decades previously. These conditions had worsened by the 630s and early 640s. Patriarch John the Almsgiver sought to negotiate a peace between the Persians and the imperial government, but encountered popular and military opposition. Leontios of Neapolis's *Life of John* was composed on Cyprus in 641/2 under Archbishop Arkadios, an ally of the embattled Patriarch Kyros.

[55] Martindale, *Prosopography*, 1354–55.

The *Vita* and its epitomes' information regarding events in 619 may contain not accurate reports but distortions that reflect the perspectives of Kyros and Arkadios in the early 640s. Then, as in 619 and the 650s, controversy flared over responsibility for the loss of Egypt. In both instances, the Patriarch of Alexandria was the object of hostility to at least one important military commander. John fled Egypt for Cyprus. He may have been accompanied by Niketas or Isaakios, who allegedly betrayed Alexandria to the Persians.[56] Kyros's abortive attempt to negotiate peace with the Arabs paralleled John's earlier approach to the Persians. One other epitome of the *Life of John* reports that Saracens (Arabs) fled to Alexandria when the Persians invaded.[57] One wonders whether they were Sinai Arabs or arrivals from Palestine. John also ransomed some families from Madianites who appear to have been Arabs from Trans-Jordan or somewhere east of the Dead Sea. Use of a Septuagint term like Madianites implies that they were Bedouin from the Dead Sea region. They were probably pursuing opportunities for enrichment in the aftermath of the chaos following the Persian defeat of the Byzantines.[58]

Those negotiating the return of captives from the Bedouin raids in 619 were the Bishop of Rhinocolura (al-'Arīsh), the Archbishop of Constantia in Cyprus and the Abbot of St. Anthony's Monastery. Involvement of the Cypriot Archbishop on behalf of Patriarch John may indicate a coastal location for a meeting and return of ransomed captives. All of these texts depict friction between the Patriarch of Alexandria and its military leadership over money or willingness to negotiate peace. John is represented as accompanied by Niketas, Heraclius's cousin. In both cases, it seems that some inhabitants of Alexandria opposed their Patriarch's settlement with the respective invader.

The "Saracens" who had fled to Alexandria before the Persian advance were a source of information about the city to the Muslim Arabs two decades later. The inclusion of a reference to them may indicate that in the past their presence in Alexandria was unusual and thus worthy of mention in the *Vita* epitome composed by Sophronios. The presence of Saracens in Alexandria created a pool of personnel of whom some spoke Arabic and could serve as translators familiar with Arab negotiating techniques.

[56] H. Delehaye, "Une vie inédite de Saint Jean l'Aumônier," *Analecta Bollandiana*, 45 (1927), 5–74, esp. 25.

[57] E. Lappa-Zizicas, "Un épitomé inédit de la vie de S. Jean l'Aumônier," *Analecta Bollandiana*, 88 (1970), 272.

[58] Delehaye, "Une vie inédite de Saint Jean l'Aumônier," 23–24; Lappa-Zizicas, "Un épitomé inédit de la Vie de S. Jean l'Aumônier," 276. Dawes and Baynes's commentary on the translation (in their *Three Byzantine Saints*) referred to Midian, but not to Arabs, hence the reason why many scholars have probably overlooked this passage: E. H. Dawes, N. H. Baynes, commentary on *Vita* of John in *Three Byzantine Saints* (Oxford, 1948), 265.

Finger-pointing over responsibility for the loss of Alexandria thus occurred at least twice in the seventh century. The accusations against Maximus the Confessor were another aspect of that controversy and its recriminations. A. J. Butler wrote his *Arab Conquest of Egypt* prior to the publication of either epitome of John's Life. He therefore could not assess its information in his otherwise competent history.

It is essential to consider the role of controversies about Kyros and Arkadios, Philagrios and Martina, and the imperial succession crisis in the composition of Leontios's *Vita* in its present form. These controversies also reinforce the need to contemplate events in Cyprus and their relationship to Alexandria and Constantinople. The earlier controversies about Patriarch John and the surrender of Alexandria belonged to recent memory. This memory probably inclined Patriarch Kyros to caution in his negotiations with 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ. The need to shield himself from allegations of treachery and betrayal may have complicated Kyros's role even further at the end of the 630s and early 640s.

An atmosphere of mistrust arose from more than differences about Christology. An earlier Patriarch was believed to have been the object of conspiracy and even murder by the military commander Isaakios. These controversies hampered decision-making. They also contributed to the breakdown of confidentiality. Heraclius's reaction to Kyros's unauthorized treaty with the Muslims was consistent with his deposition of John Kateas, curator of Osrhoene, for negotiating a similar truce with the Muslims after the battle of Yarmūk. There is a logic in Heraclius's policies of restraint over administrators attempting to make separate terms, whether in northern Syria, upper Mesopotamia or Egypt.[59]

Patriarch John the Almsgiver played an uncertain role in negotiating an obscure peace settlement between the naval commander Aspagurios and the Cypriot port of Constantia in 619. It is possible that dissident and disgruntled Byzantine military forces on Cyprus had considered the rejection of imperial authority in the wake of Persian victories and Byzantine defeats. That strife in 619 had further complicated Byzantine efforts to defend Egypt from the Persians.[60]

The controversial stance of Archbishop Arkadios of Constantia towards the imperial succession crisis at the death of Heraclius could have made Egypt's lines of communication at the difficult moment of 641/2 even more tenuous. It probably discouraged the leadership in Egypt from taking further risks. It jeopardized communications and logistics at the worst possible moment for Egypt's security. Those who sailed between Constantinople and

[59] Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, 160–9, 202, 253.

[60] On ties with Cyprus see M. Rodziewicz, *Alexandrie* I: *La céramique romaine tardive d'Alexandrie* (Warsaw, 1976), 55.

Egypt via Cyprus could not have been ignorant of these frictions. They adversely affected the Byzantine army's morale. The murky case of Aspagurios thus underscores strife in Cyprus in the second decade of the seventh century, a prelude to difficulties stemming from Heraclius's death and the resultant succession crisis in the early 640s that compromised Egypt's security.

Three ecclesiatical leaders – Patriarchs John and Kyros of Alexandria, and Archbishop Arkadios of Constantia – died in the midst of the events of 619 and 641 respectively. General Isaakios, involved like John in the earlier controversy, also died in Cyprus during the course of events. Their deaths exacerbated the rapid turnover of imperial leadership at Constantinople and prohibited a continuity of leadership.

The precedent of negotiations with Arabs about captives does not in itself confirm the veracity of other reports about negotiations to forestall the Muslim invasion. But there is testimony that Patriarch John had planned to turn away the Persians by negotiation, and that General Isaakios, after betraying Alexandria to them, sought to murder John when he was fleeing to Cyprus. These events foreshadowed Kyros's actions. Butler doubted whether the Muslims would have accepted money in return for some temporary respite of three years. Yet the payment of a substantial sum to them would have denied it to the Byzantines for their defense of Syria and Anatolia. Thus a decision by the Muslims to accept it would be perceptive. It would reinforce their position while denying vital resources to their opponents at a critical moment. The strategic situations on these different fronts were interrelated.

The interest of Niketas, according to the *Vita* of John the Almsgiver, in associating John with Heraclius is noteworthy, if the account is accurate. By inference, Patriarch John may have sought to avoid implying his approval of Heraclius in those desperate moments of the emperor's reign that were clouded by questions over his imperial legitimacy and doubts over divine protection for the empire. Echoes of civil–ecclesiastical strife are discernible even in the story of Niketas and John. This story had odd resonances at the end of Heraclius's reign. The *Vita*'s author emphasizes the close relationship between Niketas and John, and subsequently between him and the dynasty. The author may have worried about new efforts by the government to seize still more ecclesiastical wealth. He accordingly invoked the prestigious names of both John and Niketas to discourage more expropriations or forced loans in the early 640s, even if they were to finance the restoration of Byzantine control over Egypt. Hagiographic memory reflected genuine ecclesiastical fears of further confiscations after 641.

As Nikephoros mentions in his *Short History*, the relationship between Niketas and his daughter, Gregoria, is significant. She married the Emperor Heraclius Constantine (III). Niketas was celebrated for victories over

Persians in Constantinopolitan statuary and one inscription, but there is no evidence that he defeated the Persians in Egypt. Presumably, he was long deceased. Whatever the genetic consequences of these ties, the nature of illnesses suffered by Fabia/Eudocia and Heraclius are unclear. The role of Empress Gregoria, who had strong ties with the neighboring Cyrenaican Pentapolis, is uncertain. She may have exerted influence at the imperial court in support of hardline policies that would protect Africa by seeking to prevent the Muslim conquest of Egypt (such as moving more troops to Egypt from other parts of Africa) or she may have reluctantly accepted the terms negotiated by Kyros in the hopes that peace in Egypt would protect Africa. Heraclius's north African heritage may have reinforced the already strong connection of Constans II to the remaining members of the Heraclian dynasty. The connection may also have reinforced his commitment to retain north Africa. Despite his limited resources, this relationship could have influenced Constans to travel west to Italy and Sicily. He murdered his brother some time after the loss of Egypt, but this act reflected the larger context of internal strife that had plagued the imperial house since Heraclius's later years.

Severus's late account of the patriarchs of Alexandria contains material on the seventh century that is compatible with Theophanes' and Nikephoros' versions. It also accords with the Christian Arab *History* of Agapius of Membij, despite religious differences. Severus also repeats the story that Egypt paid three years' tribute to stave off the Muslim invasion, an assertion made by Nikephoros and Theophanes. So even a Coptic tradition, or one passed down by a Monophysite tradent, accepts the tradition of an arrangement to buy off the Muslims from their invasion. It may have derived from what Theophilus of Edessa passed on to Nikephoros and Theophanes. These accounts were consistent with the activities of Patriarchs like John the Almsgiver, who also sought to make arrangements in lieu of warfare and the consequent loss of life and property.

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the Byzantines could have fashioned a better defense of Egypt than they did. The fall of Egypt was not inevitable, although at some point reversal of the process became difficult. Internal Byzantine strife was worse during the empire's attempts to defend Egypt than during its unsuccessful efforts to hold Syria. The initial capture of Alexandria in 641 marked a threshold, if that had not already been crossed when Babylon surrendered to the Muslims. The caliber of the generals sent to direct the resistance was low. The accession in late 641 of a leadership in Constantinople that favored resistance to the end did not substantially alter Egypt's position. That new leadership needed to consolidate its grip on power, and while seeking to deflect criticism, it could not afford to take big risks. It did send Manuel the Augustulis with a large force in a last attempt to retrieve the deteriorating situation. But that expedition

ended in ignominious failure, although there was no naval disaster comparable to that of 468 when the Byzantine fleet failed to recover Africa from the Vandals. The Byzantines suffered no serious losses from their Egyptian operations. Recriminations about the defeat reverberated for decades in many literary genres, but these charges did not illuminate the complex context of decisions and actions. There does not appear to have been any great longing for a return to Byzantine rule among Egyptians, and unlike in northern Syria, that was not an option since Byzantine power rapidly receded westward across north Africa.

From the perspective of the Byzantine regime, it was a success simply to have extricated its elite forces by sea after the likelihood of Muslim victory was obvious. Accordingly. there was little hope for a reversal of conditions that would allow a Byzantine recovery. In the early 640s, the government could afford the loss of no more elite troops to the Muslims. How much equipment they did abandon in the evacuation is unknown. Byzantine forces in Egypt suffered no battle of annihilation, nor were they trapped under siege and destroyed. Thus in conclusion, the Byzantines won no victory, but avoided a disaster that would have weakened their defenses in Anatolia and the Balkans. On balance, the Byzantines lamented the Muslim conquest as "the Egyptian destruction."[61] For Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam and his sources, it was the Emperor Heraclius who was the backbone of Byzantine resistance and with him perished Byzantine power in Egypt.[62]

A tentative chronology of important events during the Muslim conquest

633	Maximus the Confessor discourages the dispatch of troops from Numidia to Egypt to reinforce Byzantine defenses against real or perceived threats of Arab military action.
637	Patriarch Kyros agrees to pay 200,000 dīnārs or their equivalent in Byzantine gold solidi annually to the Muslims to deter them from invading Egypt.

[61] Anastasius the Sinaite, *Sermo adversus Monothelatas* 3.1, 86–92, in: *Anastasii Sinaitae Opera. Sermones duo in constitutionem hominis secundum imaginem Dei necnon Opuscula adversus Monothelatas*, ed. Karl-Heinz Uthemann, Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca, 12 (Brepols-Turnhout, 1985), 60.

[62] See Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr*, 76, relying as always on Yaḥyā ibn Ayyūb, who died in 784, and Khālid ibn Ḥumayd, for traditions about Heraclius stimulating resistance to the Muslims. These traditions are valuable, because only the Egyptian school has left identification of tradents of traditions about Heraclius's refusal to accept locally inspired peace treaties. Such treaties occurred in northern Syria, and were rejected by him, but Theophanes or his oriental source does not identify the Syrian source for such traditions in the north. In any case they were not unique to the last days of Byzantine Egypt.

December 639	'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ commences his invasion, from southern Palestine.
End of January 640	Pelusium falls to the Muslims after a one-month siege.
July 640	The Muslims win an important victory at Heliopolis or 'Ayn Shams.
640	The Emperor Heraclius summons Patriarch Kyros to Constantinople and criticizes his negotiations with the Muslims.
Late 640 or early 641	Miṣr or the town of Babylon (Old Cairo) falls to the Muslims. The Muslims begin to invade the upper delta of the Nile.
February 11, 641	The death of the Emperor Heraclius.
April 9, 641	The citadel of Babylon or Old Cairo falls to the Muslims.
May 13, 641	Nikiu falls to the Muslims.
May 24, 641	The death of Emperor Heraclius Constantine III, when power temporarily devolves to the regency of Empress Martina and Patriarch Pyrrhos of Constantinople; Philagrios is exiled to north Africa.
September 641	The coronation of Constans II after the deposition of Martina and her sons; Philagrios is recalled from exile.
September 14, 641	Kyros returns to Alexandria.
September 29, 641	Muslim troops enter Alexandria.
November 28, 641	The Byzantine treaty, signed at Babylon, surrenders Egypt.
December 10, 641	The first payment of tribute from Egypt to the Muslims after this treaty.
March 21, 642	The death of Patriarch Kyros.
September 17, 642	Byzantine troops under the command of Theodoros evacuate Alexandria, but leave a prefect, John, to coordinate the transition to Muslim rule.
644/45	There is an abortive effort by the eunuch Manuel to recover Egypt with the assistance of a Byzantine fleet. Manuel is slain.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AI	*Annales islamologiques*
BEO	*Bulletin d'études orientales*
BIE	*Bulletin de l'Institut d'Egypte*
BIFAO	*Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire*
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
EI2	*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition (Leiden, 1960–).
EIR	*Encyclopaedia Iranica*
EPRO	Études préliminaires aux réligions orientales dans l'Empire romain (Leiden)
IJMES	*International Journal of Middle East Studies*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JARCE	*Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*
JESHO	*Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*
MESA	Middle East Studies Association of North America (Tucson, AZ)
MIFAO	Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire
MW	*The Muslim World*
REI	*Revue des études islamiques*
SI	*Studia Islamica*
WO	*Die Welt des Orients*

1 EGYPT UNDER ROMAN RULE: THE LEGACY OF ANCIENT EGYPT

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2 EGYPT ON THE EVE OF THE MUSLIM CONQUEST

Papyri

BGU = *Ägyptische Urkunden aus den Königlichen Museen zu Berlin, Griechische Urkunden* (Berlin, 1895–98).

CPRF = J. Karabacek, *Corpus Papyrorum Raineri: Führer durch die Ausstellung* (Vienna 1894).

The Oxyrhynchus Papyri. 1898–

SB = F. Preisigke, et al. *Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Aegypten*. 1915–

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CPRF 556; *SB* 9748 = *CPRF* 552; *SB* 9749 = *CPRF* 553; *SB* 9755 = *CPRF* 554; *SB* 9751 = *CPRF* 559; *SB* 9752 = *CPRF* 560; *SB* 9753 = *CPRF* 561, from Friedrich Preisigke, Fr. Bilabel, contd. by Emil Kiessling, *Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 1965), 8: 86–89, 89–90; all of these last are from Herakleopolis Magna, or modern Ihnāsīyat al-madīna, in the Fayyūm area.

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